



The one thing that strikes me this week about the Gospel is the generosity of God. We believe as Catholics that the Catholic Church is the fullness of the Christian faith. In other words, in the Catholic Church is everything that God wants us to have to become holy now and to get to heaven. We have the sacraments, bishops, the Pope, the Word of God, Mary as our Mother, and on and on. We have everything that God wants us to have. In the Catholic Church, there is nothing missing as far as her structure goes.

Does this mean that Catholics are the only ones going to heaven? Of course not. All baptized people have been given the gift of salvation. However, it does mean that Christians who are not Catholic are not able to live in the fullness of the Christian faith as Jesus desires. That's not a moral judgment against them. It is simply a fact that they do not have access to everything that we have access to: the Eucharist, apostolic teaching, confession, and so forth.

My best friend from high school is an evangelical. He has a relationship with the Lord. He reads the bible. He prays. But he will probably never receive the Eucharist. This is why it is so important to work for the perfect unity of the Church.

But here is what I want to point out: Can we not see God do great things among non-Catholic Christians? Why is that, if indeed they do not live in the fullness of the Christian faith? It is because God is generous – abundantly generous – in pouring out His grace. In spite of the division in the Church which was caused by human sin, God pours out abundantly His grace on non-Catholics through those means that they do share with us: baptism, the Sacred Scriptures, and the power of the Holy Spirit. And in fact, the Methodist or Lutheran down the street could be much holier than I am because they have taken greater advantage of the means of grace that they do have.

Isn't this reflective of Jesus' words today? "There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who at the same time can speak ill of me, for whoever is not against us is for us." Indeed, non-Catholic Christians are our brothers and sisters in Christ and without watering down our belief that the Catholic Church is the fullness of the Christian faith, we should always be as brothers and sisters respecting the work of God among them. Because God is generous.

Fr. Mark Gurtner at St. Anthony de Padua, South Bend
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